The TUTOR

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Moving Beyond Black and White

By Gale Greenlee

Diversity. For years it's been a buzzword in American culture, touching every arena: from corporations to nonprofits, from churches, to families, to schools.

As a tutor, you may have noticed an increase in multicultural books in your school's library. Maybe while tutoring, you and your tutee compare your childhood in a rural town with his or her life in a bustling urban area. Perhaps when working in groups, you realize that boys and girls communicate and interact differently. Whatever the situation, we are all affected by diversity—even kids.

From an early age, children recognize and perceive differences in race, language, gender, and physical ability. Unfortunately, the messages society sends about these differences are often negative. They may be subtle, but children receive them nonetheless. Consequently, stigmas, stereotypes, and other negative attitudes about difference can affect a child's development and outlook on life. For children to develop healthy attitudes about difference and to learn to relate to others in a positive manner, they need role models—people who can teach them that difference is normal. This is where you come in.

By serving in diverse communities and working with diverse populations, you stand as much to gain as your tutee. Exposure to people with different experiences, opinions, beliefs, and worldviews can broaden your own perspective of the world and the people in it. Being receptive to learning from the experiences of others (whether your tutee, a parent, teacher, or national service member) can help you to establish trusting relationships with others. Through these connections, you have the opportunity to strengthen your own level of cultural competence (your ability not only to acknowledge, but to appreciate and respect the many differences others bring, and interact with comfort and ease).

What is Diversity?

Diversity is difference. In a country of many peoples from many lands, too often the term is taken to mean only "racial," "ethnic," or "cultural" diversity. While these are important aspects of diversity, they do not encompass the many dimensions of this concept. There are also differences in gender, economic status, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, religion, language, learning styles, and interests.

Diversity lies within all types of organizations, including the Corporation for National Service. Through the America Reads Challenge, the Corporation engages diverse populations. Immigrants and native-born citizens, middle- and working-class people, seniors and college students are all united to help children learn to read. Within an individual program, there is diversity among staff, members, and volunteers. We also find diversity within the community we serve—among children, teachers, and schools, and among individuals of the same race, gender, economic background, and interest group.

As a result, most national service members, volunteers, and program staff participate in some sort of diversity training. We do this to: learn how our personal experiences shape us and affect our relationships with others; increase our ability to interact with and understand individuals from backgrounds different from

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The TUTOR is your source for topics of interest to education-focused National Service projects.

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our own; foster stronger connections with communities; and make our projects more effective.

Looking at Diversity

Across New York State, more than 40 AmeriCorps members with the **Self-Advocacy Association of New York (SA)** help people with disabilities become valued and independent members of their communities. SA is a nonprofit organization operated by individuals with developmental disabilities. Of its 40 members, 33 have disabilities. Inspired by their motto, "Our experience is our teacher," members work in schools to raise students' awareness about disabilities, to promote inclusive education among teachers, and to teach self-advocacy skills to students with disabilities.

"People with disabilities have an incredible story to tell and so much to give back to the community," says SA's Administrative Coordinator and AmeriCorps Project Director, Steve Holmes. "They are the best at changing people's attitudes about disabilities."

Holmes admits that SA members often face negative attitudes about people with disabilities. But, through their work in schools, they are slowly convincing students and adults alike that children with disabilities have many of the same needs, strengths, and desires as other kids.

On the other side of the country, in the heart of the Navajo reservation, sits the town of Round Rock, Arizona. It is a rural community, home to roughly 3,000 people, with an unemployment rate of nearly 60 percent. In addition to the chapter house (local government office), a trading post, and a school, there is **Round Rock AmeriCorps**.

At first this program may seem to lack diversity, since all 15 of its members are Navajo. However, as Program Director Monty Roessel points out, "We combine both Navajo culture and the best of Western culture (for example, technology) so that students learn to read and write *and* learn what it means to be Navajo. We help them be proud of who they are."

Most of the community's 200 students attend Arizona public schools and receive instruction similar to that of any other American school. AmeriCorps members tutor kids in English and Navajo, often using tools such as bilingual flashcards. They also participate in "cultural mentoring" in order to "re-teach" the values and traditions that are distinctively Navajo.

These members, who have made a commitment to remain on the reservation and improve their community, also recognize that elders have much to contribute. They encourage elders to volunteer, telling coyote stories to children and passing on the history behind traditions like the stick game. These intergenerational activities strengthen the community and reinforce the bonds between young and old.

On the East Coast, AmeriCorps members and Learn and Serve participants in **Rhode Island** tutor students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. They serve in urban centers that boast large immigrant populations, speaking 69 languages and representing Southeast Asia, West Africa, Cape Verde, and several Spanish-speaking countries.

Even with such great diversity, economic disparities are a more pressing challenge for those serving in the state's urban communities. Many members are from different economic backgrounds and are not accustomed to the conditions and challenges associated with poor, urban communities.

"In the communities in which we work, one in three children lives at or below the federal poverty line," says Nicole Boothman-Shepard, executive director of the Rhode Island State Commission. "Among the children supported by our initiatives, many are not reading at grade level. Their opportunities to develop academically have been obscured by barriers associated with poverty and school systems that are ill-equipped to deal with issues affecting the children outside of school."

Despite the cultural and economic differences between the tutors and tutees, Boothman-Shepard believes that connecting individuals from different backgrounds creates a fertile ground for learning. "The benefits of working in a diverse community are endless," she says. "Service providers are going to have their assumptions challenged, their perspectives broadened exponentially, and they will emerge as more thoughtful change agents in the community."

As these scenarios demonstrate, national service programs approach diversity in many ways and on many levels. While there are many challenges associated with serving in diverse communities, there are many benefits as well. As a tutor, you have a tremendous opportunity to positively influence a child's perception of difference, and to learn from another's point of view. By checking in with yourself (about your own perceptions of diversity, including biases and stereotypes), you are in a better position to understand the perspectives of others, especially your tutee(s). ■

About This Issue

This issue of *The Tutor* explores various issues of diversity. It is not a complete guide to diversity, just a first step. Seek out other resources (see "Resources," p. 11). Talk to individuals and contact organizations that can help you enhance your level of cultural competence and that of your program.

Designed to broaden understanding of diversity, this issue offers guidelines to identify stereotypical images in books, an explanation of various learning styles, and ways to make service activities accessible for all students. In the end, you and your tutee may not simply "tolerate" diversity, but truly embrace it, want to learn more about it, and achieve greater understanding—of yourself and others.

Project SUCCESS has given me more respect for people who are "different." The first thing I notice is not their disability and what they can't do; it's what they can accomplish that really counts. I feel that I get as much out of our projects as the people we are helping. I have met some of my closest friends through Project SUCCESS. The skills I've learned, people I've met, experiences I've had, will last me a lifetime.

—Project SUCCESS Participant

Project SUCCESS

Diversity Open Doors to Learning: Minneapolis Seniors for Schools

By Sarah E. Torian

"Do you recognize my accent?" asks Val Jackson. "I was born in Jamaica and moved to England in my teens. I've only lived in Minneapolis for the past 10 years." Jackson is one of 48 Seniors for Schools volunteers tutoring elementary school children in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Although he spends most of his time helping students improve their reading skills, he also occasionally takes the opportunity to use his unique experiences to expose them to different parts of the world. "I try to talk about the different types of food people eat in different countries and areas," Jackson explains, "but right now the children are mostly interested in where the different places are on a map. I do think it broadens their understanding of different cultures and geography."

Val Jackson is a part of the **Minneapolis Seniors for Schools** project, funded by the Corporation for National Service. It is one of nine demonstration sites that make up Seniors for Schools, a national initiative, enlisting the services of men and women over the age of 55 to serve in teams and make a significant contribution to help children learn to read. This project is an integral component of President Clinton's "America Reads Challenge," working to ensure that every child can read well and independently by the end of the third grade. The eight other Seniors for Schools projects are in Boston, Massachusetts; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Leesburg, Florida; New York, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Port Arthur, Texas; and Portland, Oregon.

Bela Osipova plays a reading game with a student at Anderson Open Elementary School in Minneapolis.

Diverse Schools and Students

The Minneapolis seniors currently work in five of Minneapolis' 48 public elementary schools and there is a long waiting list of schools that have requested their services. In the five schools, 48 senior volunteers work with over 300 children. But each school is very different. Two of the schools are "open schools," where there are very few walls to divide classes and people. Two of the schools are "walled schools" with the standard wall divisions and structure. The fifth school is actually in an old Catholic church building that the city is renting so its classrooms are very small. "Each school is almost a city unto itself, where the principal is the mayor," explains Minneapolis Seniors for Schools project director Barb McKenzie. "Being flexible is the key for us. We are amoebas that change in order to work best with a specific school."

The schools also vary greatly in the demographics of their student body populations, demonstrating the diversity of Minneapolis' population. Two of the schools are very diverse. Their populations include Asian American, African American, Caucasian (including Russian immigrants), and English language learner students. Two are predominantly African American (97 and 69 percent, respectively), with Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Caucasians also in attendance. The fifth school is 50 percent Caucasian with the remainder divided between African American and English language learners. "That diversity in a school lets the students learn about each other's cultures and become friends," says tutor Ida Hill, who volunteers at Anderson Open School.

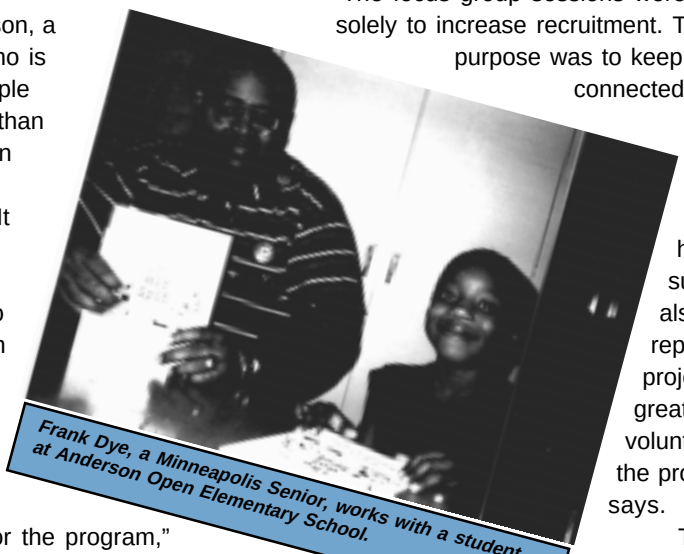
As the Minneapolis project has expanded from the first school, four years ago, to the five it now supports, the project staff has used the reputation of success it developed at the first school to open doors to other schools. But they have also targeted schools that are receptive to volunteer support. "Before we decide to work in a school," explains McKenzie, "we make a point of making sure the school really wants volunteers. All of the schools we serve have been very welcoming."

Diverse Tutors

The Seniors for Schools tutors are frequently drawn from the communities that the schools serve, so they tend to embody the schools' diversity as well. They include African Americans, Caucasians, and several Russian immigrants. They open the students' eyes

and minds to other cultures, countries, accents, and ways of living. The children not only learn to read from their time spent with the Senior tutors, but also see their worlds expand.

By reading with Frank Johnson, a Seniors for Schools volunteer who is blind, the children learn that people with disabilities are much more than their disability. "Frank is very open with the children about how he became blind," says McKenzie. "It helps makes the children more accepting of people with disabilities." The children read to Johnson. If they have trouble with a word, he has them spell it out to him and he listens for mistakes by following the sentence structure and storyline. "He is a huge recruiter, inspiration, and spokesperson for the program," says McKenzie.



Frank Dye, a Minneapolis Senior, works with a student at Anderson Open Elementary School.

Bela Osipova moved to Minneapolis from Russia nine years ago. In Russia she was a university professor, but when a neighbor asked her if she wanted to volunteer as a tutor to young children, she thought it would be fun to try. "I had taught big kids. Now I thought I'd try teaching little kids," Osipova says. She knows that her background informs them of global geography, but she is most impressed with the improvements she has seen in their confidence, interest, and ability in reading. "I see the results every day," she says. "They are reading much better and they love to come read with me. They don't want to leave!"

Building Self-Confidence in Young Readers

Many of the children being tutored were discouraged before they began the tutoring sessions. They had grown accustomed to failure in reading. For many of them, reading was something to avoid. One of the great successes of the Minneapolis Seniors for Schools project is the boosting of these students' confidence levels in reading.

Val Jackson has witnessed the effects of this increased confidence in his tutees. "Several of the students were apprehensive when reading, but they have become more confident in what they can do. Once they realize they can read, they don't want to stop. Generally, most of them have really improved their confidence levels."

The Minneapolis Seniors for Schools program has been very successful in recruiting volunteers. Last year, there were 30 volunteers working in four schools. This year, that number has grown to 48—36 full time and 12 part time. McKenzie attributes much of this growth to the focus group meeting they held during last summer break. "We asked the volunteers to be ambassadors for Seniors for Schools." McKenzie explains. "We challenged them to tell their friends about it and recruit 20 people."

The focus group sessions were not organized solely to increase recruitment. Their original purpose was to keep the volunteers connected during the summer months. "We wanted to tell volunteers about staff changes happening over the summer and we also knew that our reports about the project would be greatly enhanced if the volunteers were a part of the process," McKenzie says.

The volunteers were asked to describe their work, the number of children they tutored during the year, and the approximate amount of time spent with each. They also relayed the stories of their biggest successes, surprises, and disappointments and expressed how much they thought their volunteerism had improved the lives of their tutees. The focus groups also provided an opportunity for the senior volunteers to voice any suggestions they had for improvements in the upcoming year. "The focus group meeting was a real success," says McKenzie. "We are making plans for another one this summer."

As the Minneapolis Seniors for Schools project continues to grow and expand, more children will strengthen their reading skills and confidence and learn about the diversity in their city and the world. Ida Hill, who has been tutoring at Anderson Open for two school years, sums it up: "It is really uplifting to be around the children and to know that you are helping them to be successful learners and to be successful citizens. I see them really come alive!" ■

Videos Available from ETR

Bank Street College videos for America Reads Programs:

Lisa and Crystal: Learning to Read
Yolene and Blayn: Reading Comprehension
Rosa and Melany: Reading in English

To order, contact Jennifer Gartin, ETR/NSRC: 800-860-2684, ext. 142; email: jenniferg@etr-associates.org; fax: 831-430-9471.

Setting High Expectations for Girls

By Emma Lanier and Gale Greenlee

Have you ever noticed that boys are called on more often than girls or that girls are frequently interrupted when they speak? Maybe you observe that, in a classroom environment, boys are subtly rewarded for being aggressive and competitive, and their inattention or hyperactivity is often passed off as "boys will be boys," while girls are expected to be cooperative, nurturing, and attentive. Or perhaps while reading with a child you are tutoring, you become aware that many children's books portray female characters as nice, pretty, and quiet, whereas male characters are depicted as daring, adventurous, and fun. These observations reveal some of the subtle ways in which learning environments can reinforce gender stereotypes. When educators approach boys and girls with different expectations, role models, and discipline guidelines, they limit their pupils' growth and pay a disservice to girls and boys alike.

National service program staff and members have a responsibility to be aware of the many ways in which gender stereotypes have an impact on their own assumptions, their program structure and activities, and their relationships with students. Gender equity is not a matter of who will get the "best" education at the expense of the other; it's about ensuring equal opportunity for girls and boys—to learn, to prepare for future education and careers, and to set high expectations for themselves, regardless of gender. As a tutor, you have an extraordinary opportunity to inform a child's perception of herself/himself and the life opportunities to which she or he aspires. Here are some check points for tutors to help them ensure that girls *and* boys are encouraged to explore, to succeed, and to achieve.

✔ **Check in with your assumptions.** Get in touch with how gender bias is affecting your thinking about your tutees; how do *you* think men and women, and boys and girls are different? Check in with yourself from time to time to be sure that you are challenging, praising, and disciplining your tutee in response to who the child is as an independent person, rather than who you think she or he should be based on her/his gender. A good checkpoint is to ask yourself if you would handle the situation differently if the child were of the opposite sex.

✔ **Check in with your materials.** Look for "learning moments." For example, when gender stereotypes are found in a book you are reading together, you and your tutee can discuss what a stereotype is and what messages it sends to readers. The best way to support your child is to consistently use these teachable moments rather than forcing the issue or pushing it beyond where she or he is comfortable addressing it. Review the books you will be reading ahead of time so that you will feel prepared for these moments when they arise. Here are some pointers drawn from *Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism* by the Council on Interracial Books for Children:

✔ **Check the illustrations**. Look for stereotypes. Some stereotypes seem flattering but can be harmful, because they typify an entire group and don't respect individual differences. Do the illustrations depict women in subservient and passive roles or in leadership or action roles? Are the male characters the active "doers" and the females the inactive "observers"?

✔ **Check the storyline**. How are problems presented, conceived, and resolved in the story? Who causes most of the problems? Who solves the problems? Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiatives and intelligence, or are they due to their appearance or their relationships with males? Could the same story be told if the genders were reversed? Are both men and women shown as heroes?

✔ **Consider the effects on the child's self-esteem**. The reader may compare herself/himself to the norms that are established by the story. What happens to a girl's self-image when she reads that boys perform all of the brave and important deeds? What about a girl's self-esteem if she is not slim or doesn't have long, blond hair?

✔ **Watch for Loaded Words.** A word is loaded when it has offensive overtones, such as "crafty" and "docile." Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or in any way demean girls and women. Look for the use of the male pronoun (he) to refer to both males and females.

✔ **Check in with your behavior.** You are a role model to your tutee. He or she is acutely tuned in to how you interact with other children, tutors, parents, and teachers. Make sure you are modeling responsible information about how and who to be in the world. The following suggestions from Girl's Incorporated's manual, *What's Equal: Figuring Out What Works for Girls in Coed Settings*, can help you be conscious of the many active ways in which you can support gender equity:

✔ **Encourage girls** to take appropriate risks, explore, ask questions, and make mistakes.

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English Language Learners

By Sarah E. Torian

During the past decade, the population of English language learners has risen exponentially in many school districts across the country. In the 1990-91 school year, there were 2.2 million students in the United States identified as having limited English proficiency. In four years, that number jumped 45 percent to 3.2 million. Being equipped and ready to serve the needs of English language learner students was once a need only for schools in states like California, Florida, and Texas and urban areas like New York City. Now it is something that schools in urban centers and rural communities across the country must address. Many of these schools have been caught unprepared for these changes.

Lee County, North Carolina, a rural county about 60 miles south of Durham, taught less than 50 English language learners among its 8,000 students a decade ago. Today, over 1,100 students, speaking over 18 non-English languages, attend its schools. There are over 200 non-English languages represented in the state's 2,000 schools. This burst has been caused by immigrants from Central America, Asia, and the West Indies who have been drawn to the rural areas of North Carolina by a strong economy and an abundance of low-skill jobs. Over the past five years, the booming food-processing and furniture-manufacturing industries have brought about immense changes in the make-up of rural school districts.

The children of these newcomer families are suffering as lawmakers are just starting to understand the changes happening in their schools. "I was absolutely amazed at the problems we found," said North Carolina State Senator Howard Lee. "I visited several schools where students were isolated in the classroom because they couldn't speak English, and no one in the school spoke their language." Some increased funding for translators and instructional materials is coming, but much more will be needed.

This phenomenon is not reserved for rural, outlying areas. Urban and metropolitan areas are seeing the numbers of English language learners in their schools rise at an astonishing rate as well. The suburban counties surrounding Atlanta have seen the number of ESL students explode in the past decade. Gwinnett County's English language learner student population rose from only 225 in 1986 to more than 2,700 in 1999. In DeKalb County, the number has risen from 662 a decade ago to more than 3,000.

Each year, more and more students are not being served by their public school systems because the school is not able to communicate with them or address their English-learning needs. As schools and communities work to address those needs, America Reads projects and volunteers can provide schools with valuable support.

A forthcoming issue of *The Tutor* will include information and strategies for America Reads volunteers to better serve English language learners. What questions and challenges do you face in your project? What strategies have you found to be especially effective at helping new English language learners and their families? To share your ideas with other readers, call us toll-free at 1-877-253-2767 or email comments to: info@southerncouncil.org. ■

Setting High Expectations, continued

✔ **Engage girls** actively in group discussions and interactions, especially during coed activities.
✔ **Ensure that girls** receive adequate attention.
✔ **Pay careful attention** to group formation and dynamics; be a deliberate group manager by structuring some group activities to be collaborative and some to be competitive and assigning group membership to mix styles and skills.
✔ **Assist girls** with taking leadership roles.
✔ **Support girls** in sticking to challenging tasks.
✔ **Maintain the same behavior standards** for girls and boys, emphasizing their taking responsibility for resolving conflicts and for monitoring their own and the group's behavior.
✔ **Address students** by their names: avoid using nicknames and terms to minimize and limit girls, such as "honey," "darling," "little girl," and "little lady."
✔ **Be mindful** of the messages girls receive and the effects those messages are likely to have.

For more resources see Girls Incorporated (www.GirlsInc.org), the American Association of University Women (www.aauw.org), Amazon.com's Brave Girls and Strong Women Bookstore (members.aol.com/brvgirls/index.htm), and the "Web site Created for Girls in the Middle (11–14) years," (www.gURLwURLd.com). ■

Service-Learning, Diversity, and Literacy Programs

By Katherine Delo and Bob Seidel

Many service-learning practitioners are familiar with the anecdote about the affluent college student who said, "I had such a wonderful experience serving soup to the homeless; I hope that my children can have the same experience." In a tutoring context, she might have said, "I hope that my children will still have the chance to tutor less fortunate children."

What's wrong with these pictures? Providing service without adequate preparation, support, and opportunities to process the experience can lead to badly flawed learning on the part of the service provider. Learning will happen, but it may be false learning, reinforcing naïve or stereotyped assumptions. This can have serious implications for the service recipient as well.

Applying service-learning principles to literacy programs cannot guarantee positive experiences, but it can help address a wide range of diversity-related issues and meet program goals. In fact, whether or not they present themselves as "service-learning," many programs understand that: (1) tutors often have much to learn if they are to be effective; and (2) effective tutors learn much through their experience. Issues may arise when tutors are different from their students in terms of age, race, class, ethnicity, gender, abilities, and other characteristics that may affect their experience and ability to communicate with each other. In these situations, programs use methods that make the service experience a positive learning opportunity for both service providers and service recipients.

Program staff needs to work with community partners to develop tutor training that addresses a comprehensive array of issues during pre-service training as well as through ongoing reflection activities.

As an example, consider the case where a relatively affluent, white college student tutors a low-income, African-American third-grade student. To maximize tutoring effectiveness, the tutor needs to know some things not only about teaching reading, but also about the third-grader's household, neighborhood, and school environment. Similarities and differences in the use of language in the student's and the tutor's respective subcultures and other cultural differences—especially concepts of self, community, knowledge, and authority—should also be addressed. Community partners, perhaps from the student's school or after-school program, can play a leading role in orienting tutors on these matters.

In fact, tutors may have to spend considerable time with the younger students even to become ready to discuss meaningfully why reading is important. If lifelong learning is the goal, we need to help our youth find their own reasons to read. Young readers need exposure to literature that is relevant and, to the extent practical, of their own choosing. To facilitate such exposure, tutors need more than a list of readings. They need to be prepared to listen to the individual child, to accept values other than their own, in short, to *learn* as much as possible about the younger student's experiences and point of view.

Listening effectively and accepting difference are not easy things to do for many of us, whether in tutoring or any other aspect of our lives. A tutoring program can facilitate tutors' learning by providing organized opportunities for tutors to meet and share experiences in structured discussions aimed at improving their effectiveness. Such discussions may include tutees and other community partners. These conversations should be integral to the program, not an optional add-on, because they contribute both to the quality of the tutoring and to the education of the tutors themselves.

Effective service-learning may also foster civic responsibility. Tutors may find themselves learning about public schools and education policy. Using reflection to discuss such topics may help tutors better understand relevant issues and see other ways to address their concerns. They may even be able to work with the students they tutor to do so. This need not be limited to education issues. If a student learns to read by reading about a problem in her community, she may want to pursue that interest further by becoming active in the community. Such activities can make tutors and students partners in action, where each brings knowledge and experience that they can use together.

These are just a few thoughts on tutoring, diversity, and service-learning. Each program needs to adopt its own design, methods, and tools. Different kinds of diversity present unique opportunities and challenges.

Service-learning principles and methods can, however, be useful in all types of program situations. For more information and materials on service-learning, contact the Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at 1-800-808-SERV, serve@tc.umn.edu, or www.servicelearning.org. ■

Katherine Delo is a program officer in the Department of Service Learning at the Corporation for National Service and Bob Seidel is a service-learning specialist at the Corporation.

Learning Styles: Tutors and Tutees Working Together

By John Wolfe

So what exactly does *learning style* mean? It is the unique and idiosyncratic way a child or adult learns something and it varies from individual to individual. A tutor's learning style profoundly influences his or her tutoring style, and if tutor and tutee learning styles clash, frustration and trouble can ensue. Identifying and describing both learning styles then becomes one pivotal element in crafting a successful tutor-tutee relationship.

John J. Hoover and James R. Patton, in their book *Curriculum Adaptations for Students with Learning and Behavior Problems* (Pro Ed, 1997), describe student learning styles in terms of seven key elements: *field, tolerance, tempo, categorization, persistence, anxiety,* and *locus of control.* Understanding a student's learning style, and adapting instruction accordingly, requires an understanding of each of these domains.

Field refers to how experiences are processed. Some students are *field independent,* meaning that they emphasize the discrete or separate parts of an experience; others are *field sensitive*, meaning that they see things as a whole rather than as an accumulation of parts or steps.

Tolerance describes the capacity to accept things that differ from the norm. Students are said to exhibit *high* or *low tolerance* for experiences or processes that are unusual or defy convention.

Tempo refers to the degree to which a student *reflects* (the tendency to need to take time to process information) or *acts impulsively* (the tendency to act or respond first, think later).

Categorization is a tool used to order experiences. Students tend toward *broad categorization* (lumping more elements together in a given category) or *narrow categorization* (putting just a few elements in a category).

Persistence refers to a student's relative ability to "stay on task." Students are described as having *high* or *low* levels of *persistence*; some choose to seek assistance and work until finished while others seem to be able to work only for short spurts of time.

Anxiety describes a student's response to "pressure to perform." Some students rise to the occasion (*low anxiety*), while others feel frustrated and want to give up under the burden (*high anxiety*).

Locus of control refers to what drives or motivates a learner. Some students tend to regulate themselves (*internal locus of control*) and others seem to need to look to the outside world (a teacher or tutor) for direction (*external locus of control*).

Identifying a tutee's learning style, and being sensitive to one's own is an important step in forging a successful tutor-tutee relationship. The fact that learning styles vary suggests that instructional approach must also vary. For success resides in the marriage of learning style and instructional approach.

John Wolfe is an advisor and instructor of Special Education at Bank Street College of Education.

Categories of Multicultural Literature

Like all good literature, multicultural literature cuts across all the genres including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Nonfiction books include biographies, informational and photo essays. Fiction includes realistic and fantasy tales. When selecting a book it is important to ask two key questions: *Is it a good story? Is it worth sharing with a child?*

There are several categories of multicultural books:

1. **World Literature is literature that is set outside the United States. This often includes folk and fairy tales, books that have been translated, and stories about children visiting relatives in other places.**
2. **Culturally Specific literature are those stories that come from the various cultural groups themselves. These books are those in which people tell their own stories. They are written by a member of the specified culture. These books typically include nonfiction and historical and realistic fiction.**
3. **Culturally inclusive books are those that are themselves about multiple cultures. They are stories about appreciating and often celebrating the similarities and differences between us all. Themes for young children include looking at where we all live, what we eat, and the various kinds of families. These books are often multi-lingual as well.**
4. **Visually integrated books are not necessarily about coming to understand something about a person's culture, but they visually show people of color, women, and those from different lifestyles as a natural part of the story.**

World Wide Learning Through World Wise Schools

By Robyn Davis

Would you like to take your students on a trip to another country? Through a program called World Wise Schools, the United States Peace Corps lets you do just that by connecting Peace Corps Volunteers serving around the world with educators in the United States. Students gain a perspective on a different country—its people, cultures, languages, and government by corresponding with a Volunteer currently serving there.

World Wise Schools (WWS) is open to all educators—in or out of the classroom—and provides activities and lesson plans on all grade levels. Educators who contact World Wise Schools will be matched with a Volunteer and will receive an annual poster, inclusion in special events, information about countries where volunteers serve, and stories of volunteer experiences. A handbook designed to help you get started and to incorporate the correspondence into your lesson plans is also provided. For more information, visit the WWS website at www.peacecorps.gov. This site is loaded with facts on different countries, volunteer experiences, and lesson plans for all levels.

Robyn Davis with two of her students in Ghana.

Activities for Your Program

- Bring books or folktales from your Volunteer's country to be read to or by your students. All cultures have children's stories whether they are recorded on paper or not. Do some research on stories in your Volunteer's country and ask the Volunteer to record children's stories.
- Research information on the country to share with your students, so they will have a basis for asking the Volunteer questions in each letter.
- Based on what the students learn from the correspondence, have your students write stories of their own about the country. Send the stories to the Volunteer. Not only will this activity give students a chance to practice their writing skills but the stories will give the Volunteer an idea of what the students find interesting and how they perceive the information she or he is sharing.
- Have students create a scrapbook about their community to send to the Volunteer. They can write about everyday life in their community and include pictures. In return, ask the Volunteer to do the same with her or his new community.
- With the information you receive, discuss the similarities and differences between your community and the Volunteer's. Ask questions that challenge stereotypes.
- Encourage your students to keep a journal chronicling the correspondence. This journal might be a place for students to record their questions, thoughts on the Volunteer's experience, and information on the country that they learn.
- Have the Volunteer send stamps, food labels, and paper money. If the writing is not in English, ask her or him to translate the writing. Your students will have a chance to compare items common to both countries.
- Ask your students to look for articles on the country in the newspaper. Discuss possible reasons for a presence or absence of material on this country.
- Have your students collect newspaper and magazine clippings and cartoons from local resources that may be of interest to the Volunteer. Although the information may seem outdated, most volunteers enjoy keeping in touch with news from home. Find out how the Volunteer gets news from home and discuss with your students what people in the country might hear about your community in their news sources.
- If you have access to the Internet, look up the country with a search engine. Many citizens and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have built websites on their country with interesting information and links to publications from that country.

For more information on becoming involved with this program, please contact World Wise Schools at: Peace Corps, World Wise Schools, 1111 20th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20526; telephone: 800-424-8580 x 1450 and (202)692-1450; fax: (202)692-1421; email: wwsinfo@peacecorps.gov.

Robyn Davis, a member of the LEARNS Training and Technical Assistance team at the Southern Regional Council, served from 1994-96 as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Volta region of Ghana.

Resources on Diversity

By Robyn Davis

Many resources have been produced to help educators understand and tackle issues related to diversity. Listed below are some of the resources available.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)—ADL is a nonprofit organization committed to stopping the defamation of jewish people and securing justice and fair treatment of all citizens. ADL offers *A Classroom of Difference* anti-bias curriculum that addresses diversity in K-12 classrooms and gives participants skills to challenge bigotry. For more information, call (212) 885-7700 or visit the website: www.adl.org.

CHP International—CHP International has been contracted by the Corporation for National Service to provide training and technical assistance focusing on human relations and diversity for staff of national service programs. Training topics include supervising diverse teams, building relationships with diverse communities, facilitating diversity awareness, and assessing organizations for cultural competency. For more information, call (800) 635-6675 or email CHPdiverse@aol.com.

Cornucopia of Disability Information (CODI)—The Center for Assistive Technology at the State University of New York at Buffalo maintains the CODI website, http://codi.buffalo.edu, which serves as a community resource for consumers and professionals by providing disability information in a wide variety of areas. It includes resources on education, directories and databases, statistics, government documents, computer access, legal issues, politics, publications, World Wide Web, aging, bibliographic references, and universal design. Call CODI at (716) 829-3141 or write to: jweir@acsu.buffalo.edu.

Global TeachNet—The objective of Global TeachNet is to promote students' knowledge of, understanding of, and respect for the people, cultures, and nations of the world. This network provides grants to K-12 teachers and shares resources on global education, including a newsletter that offers information on global education and lesson plans for grades K-8 and 9-12. (Newsletter requires a $25 annual membership fee.) For more information, call (202) 293-7728, ext. 8, visit: www.rpcv.org/globaled or write to: rpcvgtn@aol.com.

The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington—This network has developed many resources to help educators make schools safer for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and educators. Though designed for Washington State, the information can apply to educators anywhere. *The Safe Schools Resource Guide* offers solid strategies on how to handle issues that arise from discrimination toward sexual minorities. Download the guide from www.safeschools-wa.org or order it from the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment. Call (206) 233-9136 or email: NCAMH@aol.com.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)—The SPLC is a nonprofit organization, combating hate, intolerance, and discrimination through education and litigation. It offers several resources on diversity:

Teaching Tolerance is a free, semiannual, 64-page magazine that provides educators with resources for promoting interracial and intercultural understanding. To subscribe, send a request on letterhead to SPLC.

Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades is a kit for early childhood educators that focuses on seven effective tolerance education programs.

The America's Civil Rights Movement kit is geared to middle- and upper-level students.

The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in America documents episodes of intolerance in U.S. history and is geared to secondary students.

To receive one free copy for your organization, call (334) 264-0286 or visit: www.splcenter.org.

The Southern Regional Council (SRC)—The SRC is a nonprofit organization that has worked to promote racial justice, protect democratic rights, and broaden civic participation since 1919. SRC provides training and technical assistance to national service programs as a part of the LEARNS Partnership.

Will the Circle Be Unbroken?, the Peabody award-winning audio documentary series produced by SRC, reveals the history of the Civil Rights Movement in five Southern communities, combining oral histories with the music of the times. It is now available on CDs or tapes, along with a teachers' guide aimed at middle, high school, and college students. To order a copy, call (404) 522-8764 or write to: info@southerncouncil.org.

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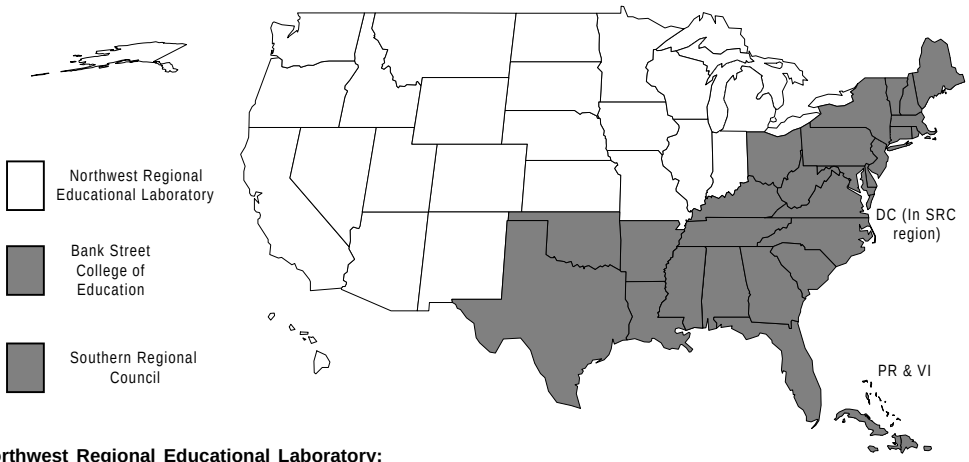

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Tutors can be Allies: Putting Allyship at the Top of Your Agenda for Students and Families

The TUTOR, Spring 1999 Special Supplement

LEARNS – Linking Education and America Reads through National Service

By Gin Lin Woo, CHP International

One of my school allies was Ms. Jensen. As a 5th grader, I observed her respect, fairness, and kindness to all students firsthand and remember appreciating the parts of the day when I could be in her classroom. She was a lover of history and made Pacific Northwest history come alive for us. I still remember when we made dioramas and were invited to imagine what people were feeling, hoping, fearing, and thinking as they struggled to form communities. She encouraged us to question and examine things from different points of view.

It was she I turned to when I decided to confront a situation at our school where a new physical education teacher was abusive. Many of us had been victims of his cruelty. I wanted to quit school; she wanted me to problem-solve and think through my options. One week later, in full view of everyone during lunch period, a core of us students presented the vice principal with a petition signed by every 5th grader with a threat of a walk-out and a call for a special parents' meeting. The next day the school administration held a meeting with the teacher and our student group to discuss the problem. We talked and the situation got better immediately. The teacher ended up staying and so did I.

Ms. Jensen believed in us and facilitated our problem solving. As a small female, living in a basement in Chinatown, learning English as a second language, and struggling almost daily with the cultural insensitivity that surrounded me at school, I needed an ally like Ms. Jensen.

Many of us are able to think back and identify a number of allies like "Ms. Jensen" who made a real difference in our school lives. They, in their humble, compassionate, and principled ways, acted as allies for us and many other students. Most of our allies would be surprised to know just how we cherish their contributions to our learning and safer passage through our school years.

> Allies are advocates for equity, access, dignity, and respect. They are committed to promoting cultural pride, empowerment, and a sense of self-worth and belonging among the young people around them.

It remains too often the case that a majority of our most "different" and marginalized students are also our most misunderstood and mistreated. They, like all students, require many adult allies and, without them, struggle to find success during their tenure in schools and school programs. When students are made targets because of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, abilities, disabilities, size, cultural membership, proficiency with English, place of national origin, immigration status, home community, political beliefs, or political status, learning definitely becomes encumbered.

The role of ally and "allyship" is critically important and needs promotion. From numerous accounts we know that the acts of allies are long-lasting and critical to positive youth development. Although ally stories inform us that allies come in different shapes, sizes, ages, roles, backgrounds, and sexual orientations, ally behaviors seem to share some common ground. This article highlights important actions of allies and may help you consider how taking on the role of an ally can not only enhance literacy development for children, but improve school and life success for all young people.

Allies generally are principled individuals who, through their daily, simple acts of courage and compassion, challenge prejudice, discrimination, ignorance, misinformation, cultural isolation, internalized oppression, alienation, poverty, limited resources, skewed power relationships, and their own privileges. Allies are advocates for equity, access, dignity, and respect. They are committed to promoting cultural pride, empowerment, and a sense of self-worth and belonging in the young people around them. Where some see "individual deficits" and cultural differences as the problem, allies appreciate the many assets and "gifts" that students, parents, and communities culturally different than themselves bring to the learning

What Is an Ally

"An ally is someone who speaks up or takes action against oppression that is not targeted at them."
(Yeskl & Wright, 1997).

An Ally:
Builds and brokers relationships;
Relates and shares information;
Advocates for justice;
Validates experiences; and
Explains norms.
(Nakashima & Hickman,1995).

experience, and they operate with the understanding that the problem is systemic.

Who are allies?

Allies are "barrier-busters." Allies come from every part of the school and community and may be parents, family members, neighbors, friends, siblings, peers, tutors, local store owners, administrative staff, lunch room staff, custodians, bus drivers, front office managers, school volunteers, classroom teachers, classroom aides, community members, leaders, etc. Often, allies have personal histories or knowledge that motivate them to help others traverse the school system and other societal institutions more effectively.

Students who need help with reading and language development are struggling in school for numerous reasons and these reasons are often systemic and connected to issues of diversity within the school culture.

The larger vision of allies calls for the restructuring of schools so that all students and families have opportunities to thrive in their learning. Allies may or may not share cultural membership (ethnicity, age, gender, class, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability and disability, immigration status, etc.) with the youth they help. They are individuals who make lasting commitments to building their awareness and competencies for working and living in harmony with cultures and communities different than their own (Nelson, 1995). Allies are not born, but develop over time and deed. With every effort made to challenge conditions, systems, practices, programming, and discriminatory attitudes that make targets of young people, allies grow in their capacity to change and transform conditions.

What are ally beliefs?

Most allies appear to operate from a fierce personal commitment to and vision of what is a fair, just, healthy, and compassionate school, community, and society. Ally behavior indicates some common beliefs such as:

◆ Each youth is unique and to be valued.

◆ An ally's role is to facilitate, improve, and empower students, families, staff, and schools to make conditions better for all students.

◆ The total ecology of the school and community matters—values, content, practices, vision, individuals, staffing, language, climate, structure, organization, cultures, communities, system of privileges, etc.

◆ Cultural competency is a commitment, a process, and a life journey.

How do allies strengthen efforts to develop literacy?

While the vast majority of tutors and school personnel are caring and well intentioned, not all of them are the allies they could be for the young people and families they serve. Students who need help with reading and language development are struggling in school for numerous reasons and these reasons are often systemic and connected to issues of diversity within the school culture. Their difficulties are often multi-layered and exacerbated by school priorities, rituals, practices, and protocol which promote a culture alien to the students. Single strategies and "one size fits all" approaches have not and will not work. Their whole person (mind, body, spirit, emotion, social/cultural legacy and identity, family and community background, and school experiences) is not yet welcomed and honored in most reading programs. Allies see how a lack of access and respect, social isolation, and the incompatability of values inhibit learning. They recognize that reading programs, like schools, often reflect the values, processes, and priorities of a narrow cultural spectrum. They also understand that there is a direct connection between students' sense of acceptance in the culture of a school or program and their ability to gain confidence in their reading ability. Canned reading programs are designed to primarily address the perceived areas of skill deficit in readers and generally are inflexible. Allies, on the other hand, build from the language and culture of individual students. Where tutors, teachers, and volunteers have made addressing issues of diversity an integral part of their program, deeper levels of learning are possible.

Seize the Opportunities!

Within the arena of literacy development, allies seize the opportunity to:

Facilitate Learning Climates that Work to Honor All Learners. The culture and climate of the school can be hostile to students who are perceived to be culturally different from the narrow norm. When allies work hard to facilitate learning environments that are safe, welcoming, respectful, and value learners' cultures and experiences, learners can relax and better focus on the learning at hand.

◆ Develop, clarify, and reinforce classroom rules that encourage mutual respect, cooperative learning, and cultural appreciation.

◆ Honor cultural and linguistic values and traditions by making a place for them within reading activities and the curriculum.

◆ Commit to meeting each student as a unique individual with talents, hopes, passions, gifts, and challenges, as well as someone who has many cultural memberships.

◆ Work at being sensitive to students' challenges and home lives and avoid making broad generalizations, unfeel-

ing comments, or creating expectations that cannot be met given current financial, emotional, physical, and cultural realities.

◆ Carefully select print material that help dispel stereotypes, correct misinformation, and work to diminish internalized negative self images.

◆ Dignify the reading process by making use of print resources that support the student's development of healthy self-esteem, cultural identity, and sense of inclusion.

◆ Model an appreciation and respect for all cultures and periodically conduct self-audits of the learning environment for cultural competence.

◆ Work with and for students to help them restructure learning environments to be more "user-friendly." This not only facilitates the lowering of anxiety for many neglected learners, but also teaches students that it is within their power to help make the classroom more responsive to their and other students' needs.

◆ Take every opportunity to bridge the culture of the students with the culture of the school and school program, using cross-cultural perspectives that allow you to share important information about both the home/community or school/program contexts without placing value judgments on either.

◆ Assess the program and school climate for issues of access and privilege and work with others to improve these conditions.

Address Issues of Diversity while Working to Help Students Build Knowledge and Skills that Will Help Them with Reading. The feelings and experiences that students have and the day-to-day challenges that they face are powerful motivation for honing skills and potent material for a language development program. Too few young people are learning that the skill of reading can be useful in their efforts to understand themselves and others and to do real life problem-solving. To do this, allies:

◆ Select content that is relevant to the lives of the students and places them in empowering roles.

◆ Nurture critical thinking and teach for social justice by exposing students to information, role models, literature, and processes that encourage them to question and solve real-life dilemmas with fairness and compassion.

◆ Use multiple strategies for literacy development to meet diverse situations, cultural contexts, and learning styles.

◆ Incorporate into your lessons many different "authentic voices" from the literature, oratory, and traditions of many cultures, especially those in which the students have membership.

◆ Integrate at least some basic phrases from students' home languages into the learning experience.

◆ Learn and make use of culturally responsive teaching strategies to reach students more naturally and enhance their learning.

◆ Enrich the reading program with information about the families' and communities' different linguistic traditions—storytelling, chanting, drama, oral and aural tradition, languages of proficiency, knowledge about whose role it is to speak to whom about what, most frequent forms of written communication, etc.

◆ Build on the students' communication gifts—storytelling, joking, composing, singing, listening, drama, and passion for news, poetry, rhythm, or metaphor.

Build an Understanding and Appreciation for the Community and Context of the Student. Understanding that there may be many different kinds of barriers that prevent students from learning to read is an important insight. Another is that an important key to opening the world of reading to young people might be readily available in their home or community. The more tutors understand the context in which learners will be refining and using their reading skills and the more they use this information to inform their strategies, the more focused and relevant the coaching of reading can be. Allies:

◆ Study the many non-reading challenges that confront English language learners, such as circumstances for immigration or migration, fluency with first language, family/community bilingual resources, family work situation, and struggles to meet basic needs.

◆ Know and share information about available community resources that could contribute to the health and well-being of the students and their families—language translators, feeding programs, dental care, legal help, job training programs, mental health counseling, culture classes, tenant rights organizations, drug-free social activities, mentoring and community service opportunities, community service agencies, and the like.

◆ Seek to understand the challenges students face as they are forced to cross-cultural code switch (between language and value systems) many times a day in home, school, community, play, work, and so forth.

◆ Seek to understand what the home and community conditions are that support and compete with each student's reading development.

Maximize Learning through Building Strong Relationships with Students, Families, and School Personnel. Just as the learning climate is important, so is the quality and composition of the network of people who surround struggling readers. Allies know the importance of reaching out to each student while strengthening relationships with significant individuals in his or her life who can help address

any problems that hinder the development of reading competencies. Allies:

◆ Take time to learn each student's story, and family and cultural history. Model for students how to do this respectfully. Invite each young person to share who he or she is, putting on hold what can easily be seen.

◆ Take time to share appropriate information about oneself with students, their families, and the school.

◆ Refuse to label, "type," categorize, or gossip about students and their families. Be willing to confront conversations that you hear in which others do.

◆ Help bridge information gaps between students, the school, and families.

◆ Partner with schools and the community to build more culturally sensitive activities and programs.

◆ Partner with schools and the community to increase student access to opportunities to build study skills, receive positive recognition, make connections to mentors and caring adults, join in service-learning, and participate in healthy, drug-free activities.

◆ Partner with parents, families, and caregivers to understand and carry out their role to support student learning and success.

◆ Partner with parents, families, and caregivers to understand what contributions they make and can make to the school/program and learning of all students.

◆ Facilitate ongoing activities that help strengthen communication between programs, home, and school.

◆ Work in collaboration with school personnel and parents to effectively challenge and bridge barriers that the schools create for students and their families.

Hopefully, this reflection on allyship will help spark important discussions. Remember, when ally stories are heard and told, they help make us recommit to our own growth and to follow through with seemingly simple acts that make a difference across the school program, curricula, culture, and community. Let each of us take inspiration from the legacy of our own allies and those in our midst and join with others to work more diligently to meet the diverse needs of all young people.

Recommended Readings:

Edited by Mauriann Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, ***Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Source Book*** (New York, N.Y.: Routledge,1997). This curriculum is geared to adult learners and workshop facilitators who help adults address issues of diversity.

Edited by Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, and Bob Peterson, Special Edition of "Rethinking Schools," ***Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice*** (Milwaukee, Wisc., 1994). Provides a collections of strategies developed primarily by K-12 practitioners to facilitate discussions with young people about social stigmitization and labeling people who are different, and to evaluate materials for bias.

Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force, ***Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*** (Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). Focused primarily on early childhood populations, this collection both provides a clear discussion of basic diversity concepts and details lots of activities.

Edited by Violet J. Harris, ***Using Multiethnic Literature in the K-8 Classroom*** (Norwood, Mass.: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 1997) This multicultural children's literature resource provides critical analysis of ethnic-specific writings and guidance on selecting reading material.

J. Hixson and M.B. Tinzmann, **"Who Are the 'At-Risk' Students of the 1990s?"** available from the National Mentoring Network (NCREL, Oak Brook, 1990) This paper clarifies different perspectives on the notion of "at risk" and challenges practitioners to think systematically.

Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti, ***Waging Peace in Our Schools*** (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1996). Tried and true strategies and resources for facilitating safe and respectful learning communities are documented and discussed in this volume.

Edited by Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey, ***Beyond Heroes and Holidays*** (Washington D.C.: Network of Educators on the Americas, 1998). This resource is a practical guide to K-12 anti-racist and multicultural education, and staff development. The back section contains a multicultural resource guide that lists resources by content area.

Edited by Lauren Miller and the Poetry for the People Collective, ***June Jordon's Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint*** (New York, N.Y.: Routledge,1995). This volume documents poetry as a unique teaching tool, offers creative ways to encourage young people to express themselves through poetry, and demonstrates the power of poetry in the lives of young adults.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Equity Center, ***Improving Education for Immigrant Students: A Guide for K-12 Educators in the Northwest and Alaska*** (Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998) Provides good background information to help tutors understand the social/cultural/political, emotional, and linguistic needs and tradtions of immigrant students.